

Questions and Answers from the Allvac Employee Briefing December 5, 2000

6:00 a.m.

Q: Who owns the property now?

A: Guterl claimed bankruptcy in 1980, and Alleghany Ludlum bought everything except for the excised property. That property belongs to the bankruptcy court.

Q: Will Alleghany Ludlum pay for contamination on the property that is not excised?

A: No, we are required to cleanup all of the radiation, no matter whose property it is on.

Comment: They used to do cleanup around the mill area, and they dumped everything into the landfill area in the back, and bulldozed around there, too.

Q: Are you going to clean the property and leave the buildings intact?

A: It is too early to tell at this time. We will know more after we do more studying. It could be more effective to take them down or to leave them up.

Q: So you aren't going to do any cleaning at this time?

A: No, we haven't had authorization to do it yet, but we are pretty sure that we are going to the next step in the CERCLA process.

Q: Are you going to remove the soil or are you going to cap it? How could the soil be safe anywhere else?

A: At Ashland, they took the soil and shipped it to a licensed disposal facility where they were able to recycle the uranium.

Q: Is there going to be any airborne contamination from your cleanup efforts?

A: That will be factored into the Proposed Plan. We will implement engineering controls to prevent dust from becoming airborne.

Q: Can the contamination get into the ground water if you keep watering it down?

A: The Oak Ridge report states that the probability for groundwater contamination is minimal, but we plan on doing more research.

Comment: The roofs act as funnel with the ground water.

Q: How deep is the contamination?

A: The Oak Ridge report says that there is some depth to the contamination but we don't know if it is consistent. Oak Ridge did grid system sampling but we are going to do our own sampling to be sure.

Q: What do you think will be the preferred method of remediation at this site?

A: Each site has its own method of cleanup because each one is different, so there really is no way to tell.

Q: If you dig up the soil, is it going to be taken out of Western New York?

A: It depends on what's in the soil; not a lot of local processing facilities will take radioactive contamination.

Q: Have you cleaned up any other sites like this one?

A: To date, we have completed or almost completed two sites, which would be Bliss & Laughlin and Ashland. We are currently working on the Linde Site, which is similar to this site because there are people working there.

Q: How would rate the site on contamination in comparison to others, based on a scale from 1 to 10?

A: It is too soon to tell at this point.

Q: How much do local officials influence this site?

A: We have had a lot of interest from Congressman LaFalce and Senator Maziarz, but they don't influence the site as far as cleanup levels are concerned.

7:00 a.m.

Q: Did you find radiation in the plant and where?

A: The Oak Ridge report found radiation in Buildings 6, 8, and 3.

Q: Did you find radiation in the pit area?

A: Yes, and the report also found it on the floors and in the dust.

Q: I spent ten years on the 10 inch mills.

A: We have received calls from people who worked there, and they have given us many valid pieces of information which will help when we get to the RI phase. The Department of Health will be at the public meeting on the 12th, and the number for the DOE is in your packet of handouts.

Q: Is it three years because of funding?

A: No, three years is the average timeframe for similar projects. It is difficult to be develop an exact schedule for completion at this early stage.

Q: I have heard that there are many sites around the country that need cleanup and that they are on a list. How do you get to the top of this list?

A: They are probably at the top of the list because of safety, but the reports indicate that there is no risk to human health and the environment at this time.

Q: What about before?

A: It's hard to tell, we would have to look at historical documents, but we are focused on what is going on now.

Q: So there is no risk now?

A: Not at this time. There is restricted access to contaminated areas.

Q: What if you worked in those buildings during the 70's and 80's?

A: That is almost impossible to tell. There are lots of variables such as toxicology and work habits that we would have to look at.

Q: If I had dust on my clothes and I carried it around, I would have a longer time of exposure.

A: You would have to talk to the Department of Health about that.

Q: Will USACE be doing its own sampling?

A: Yes.

Q: If you drive machinery over the contaminated landfill areas, will it disturb the contamination?

A: The landfill is naturally capped with soil and vegetation, it may be disturbed but it would be minimal. The places of contamination are fenced off and marked. If we need to perform a cleanup, we would wet down the dirt and do air monitoring.

Q: Are you going to monitor around the buildings where people are working?

A: We do real-time spot monitoring and perimeter air monitoring.

Q: For your other sites, what is left after cleanup? Is it still low level?

A: When remediation is complete at Ashland it will be safe for residential use.

Q: What is at the site, is it low level?

A: It is mostly low-level. What's left over is residue from a process, it's not the raw material.

Q: How much does funding determine our method and level of cleanup?

A: Money won't make us compromise our levels. We can always request more money. We have a good track record with getting money from our Headquarters, and we won't go to a lesser standard of cleanup because we don't have the money.

Comment: I used to clean the pits on a weekly basis.

Q: Is there a particular type of cancer that relates to this type of exposure?

A: You would have to ask the DOH about that.

Comment: People that worked in maintenance had a higher exposure for a longer period of time.

Q: Do you have any information about the medical conditions or the cancer rates around the site or in the area?

A: You would have to talk to the DOE and the DOH about that. The DOE has a compensation program for past employees that worked on MED-related activities, and the DOH has a pamphlet about cancer clusters. They will both be at the meeting on the 12th.

Q: Have you had a meeting for neighboring property owners?

A: This is our first meeting for the site. We will be having one on December 12th as well.

2:00 p.m.

Q: Do you have a map that shows where the contamination is?

A: Several maps detailing potential locations of elevated residual radioactivity can be found in the ORISE 1999 report. This report is available upon request.

Q: What would the Proposed Plan be? Would you clean the soil, tear down the buildings, what?

A: Our goal is clean up the radiation and we will do whatever it takes to ensure that.

Q: Will this be a brownfields site when the cleanup is finished?

A: USACE does not make that determination.

Q: Does your website give numbers for radiation levels?

A: The 1999 ORISE report will be online shortly.

Q: Do you have your own crews, or will you hire from the outside to do the remediation?

A: We usually contract out.

Q: Is it three years to develop the plan or for the cleanup?

A: Three years is an approximate estimate from the start to the finish but there are many variables that could prolong or shorten the time. We will know more once more studying is done.

Q: There was talk in the media about a compensation program?

A: The DOE number is on the packet of handouts that we gave you and they will also be at the meeting on December 12, 2000.

Q: On the blue outlined area on the map, who owns it?

A: The blue outline and the landfill are owned by a bankruptcy trustee for Guterl.

Q: If buildings have to be removed does FUSRAP have cooperation with the land owners?

A: The owners are going to be stakeholders so they do have some say, but we have the final say. We go by safety so whatever safety says we do.

Q: Is there radiation in the ground water?

A: According to the report, ground water contamination has potential but it is not likely. We are going to do more samples to be sure.

Q: Are there other contaminants other than radiation?

A: We don't know yet, but there might be. We know of acids, there were quenching tanks. We are going to have to do more studying.

Q: What is a safe proximity to radioactivity?

A: USACE has not reviewed information that suggests an imminent threat to human health through the presence of residual radioactivity.

Comment: Even though the contamination is a few hundred feet away we are here everyday.

Q: Are the fences far enough away that there is still a safe distance from the site?

A: Even if you are inside the fence, you are still OK; what you don't want to do is go into the buildings, because of the asbestos.

Q: Workers were assigned to work in Building 24 fifteen years ago, now we are told that it is hot, the area of contamination is always expanding.

A: In 1958 the site was cleaned up to standards of the time. It appears from the ORISE report that the northern portion of building 24 is not contaminated. The snow fence was put in place to restrict access, and there were limitations with some of the previous studies. Our studies will be more comprehensive.

Q: Is the equipment in the buildings contaminated?

A: After review of the ORISE 1999 report, several items within the building have the potential to be contaminated.

Q: Are the radiation readings above ground or under ground?

A: Both. Most of it is subsurface, but there is some contamination above ground.

Q: How deep does the contamination go?

A: It varies; it goes from around a few inches to about five feet.

Q: When you are cleaning are you going to disrupt normal routines at the plant?

A: We are going to coordinate with Allvac; we will work with them as plans are developed.

Q: Will there be safety issues when you do the cleanup? Are you going to have to evacuate the plant for a few weeks?

A: All activities will be coordinated with the Allvac personnel. Safety is the #1 driving factor in all activities performed by USACE.

Q: Sixteen years ago the problem was identified, what took so long?

A: The site was determined eligible by DOE in May and assigned to the Buffalo District in September.

Comment: I think that the radiation here is more important than the asbestos at Linde.

Q: Who pays for the cleanup?

A: The funds come from Congress.

Q: Is there going to be a disruption in plans because of the election?

A: FUSRAP is a non-partisan program, there is no indication that there will be a problem.

Comment: Keep employees informed because we get questions from the public.